

GALATIANS PART 14

GAL. 4.8-11

Last week, we began studying chapter 4 of Galatians, which is in reality a continuation of the thoughts of chapter 3.

In these two chapters, Paul is explaining to the church at Galatia – as well as to believers throughout time – the meaning of the gospel of grace.

Paul is attempting to convince the Galatian believers that they have taken a wrong turn in their spiritual development and are wandering down a pathway of false doctrine that only leads to failure.

In order to make his point, Paul has spent several verses explaining the relationship between the Law of Moses as it was given to the Jews and the gospel of grace as it is offered to all men.

Paul taught that the only way that any man can have a right relationship with God is through faith.

The true descendants of Abraham are not those who can trace their bloodlines back to the founder of the nation of Israel, but those who can trace the faith in their hearts back to the same kind of faith that led Abraham to leave his home and travel to a far and distant land of promise.

Paul taught both the Galatian believers and the Jewish false teachers that...

- There is no justification in the Law. The reason is that no man can obey all of the Law. Even to fail in one point of the Law makes man guilty of violating the entire Law.
- There is no life in the Law. The end of the Law is death.

Rom. 7:5 For while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death.

To make his point about the purpose of the Law, Paul used three illustrations, two of which we looked at two weeks ago in Chapter 3 and the third we studied last week in the first seven verses of Chapter 4.

Paul taught that, for the Jew, the Law was like...

1. A prison or a prison guard
2. A *pedagogos*, or a servant who served as his master as a strict disciplinarian and guardian of the master's children
3. The minor child of a very wealthy father, prevented by law from any access or control over either his person or the property that would one day be rightfully his.

Both were in the hands of others appointed by the father until the child reached the age of majority set by the father.

When the child reached the age of majority – about the age of 18 – he was given by his father complete access to all of the wealth that was rightfully his by inheritance.

Paul taught that Christ's coming to earth as the Messiah – as the promised seed of Abraham – set the Jews free from the burden and the curse of the Law just as the Father set his child free when he reached the proper age.

Christ is the truth – and the truth sets men free. So Paul says in...

Gal. 4:7 So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.

Why, then, would any Jew who had come to recognize Jesus as Lord – who had come to experience the joy of salvation and the

indwelling of the Holy Spirit – entertain the idea of going back into the slavery inherent in the Law?

Paul could have reminded these Jews of another time when the people of Israel longed to return from the context of freedom back into the confines of slavery.

Ex. 16:3 ...the people of Israel said to them (Moses and Aaron), “Would that we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the meat pots and ate bread to the full, for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.”

Num 11:5 “We remember the fish we ate in Egypt that cost nothing, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic. 6 But now our strength is dried up, and there is nothing at all but this manna to look at.”

To require a person to keep the Law in the light of the glory and the freedom in Christ would be the same as returning from the freedom of the wilderness into the slavery of Egypt.

It was illogical and foolish to hold on to such a doctrine.

In the first seven verses of Chapter 4, Paul has addressed the Jews.

Now, beginning in verse 8, Paul once again directly addresses the Galatian believers.

Verse 8

Paul says, “Just as the Jews were slaves to the Law of Moses, before you came to know God, you who are of a non-Jewish background were once slaves to the false gods that you worshiped.

“You were slaves to those who are not gods since there is no other God but Jehovah – held in bondage by a concept.

“Before coming to Christ, you put your trust in things that had no substance – no form or reality – no power to save.

“They were idols made of wood and stone that had no heart and therefore could never love or provide or deliver or save.

“And to these things pagan gods you were slaves.”

Someone has said that behind every false god is a demon, and I tend to believe that is true. In fact, Paul would later write to the church at Corinth...

1 Cor. 10:20 ...what pagans sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God.

Satan loves it when we carry out the forms of religion and worship without the substance of obedience.

Satan would prefer that you not come to church, but if you insist on coming, then the next best thing for him to do is to keep you focused on the programs and the music and the fellowship – anything as long as your focus is not on Christ and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Verse 9a

Paul rephrased himself for a couple of reasons.

One is that he wanted the Galatians and all believers to recognize that the death of Christ did not just reconcile us to God, but that it also reconciled God to us.

Not only is fallen man offended by the presence of God – God is offended by man’s sin and rebellion and refuses to allow him to come into His presence in such a condition.

At our salvation, not only did we come to know God and gain the privilege of entering into His presence, but God’s wrath against us because of our sin and unrighteousness was appeased and we are at peace with God.

A second reason that Paul rephrased himself was to avoid any misunderstanding on the part of his readers that their standing before God as sons had anything to do with anything they had done or willed.

The initiative in salvation belongs to God. God had come to know them. He made the first move as He always does in salvation.

The only reason that these Galatians were included among the redeemed was that God had called them to salvation by His own initiative – by His grace and mercy – not because of any merit within them.

Paul reminded the Galatian believers that they did not gain their knowledge of God by their own enterprise or by an exertion of their own will or desire.

"God so loved the world" is not a statement of quantity – it is not a statement that tells us how much love God has. Remember that God does not have love – He is love.

"God so love the world" is a statement of quality, not quantity. It says, "Here is the way in which God demonstrated His love for the world – He gave."

Paul continued this thought in Romans 5:8 where he wrote, "God demonstrated his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners – while we were still in a lost and condemned position of rebellion without any desire in our hearts to ever seek after God or righteousness – Christ died for us."

Then John repeated the same idea in his first epistle "...not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation of our sins." (1 Jn. 4:10).

Before the Galatians were granted the gift of salvation through the word preached by Paul and Barnabas, they were actively pursuing other gods – which were not really gods at all.

Only by God's grace did the people of Galatia hear the message of the gospel of grace through the preaching of God's word.

Verse 13 of Galatians 4 seems to indicate that Galatia was not the target for Paul's first missionary journey, but that God directed his steps in their direction on purpose – to fulfill His own purposes.

Read v. 13

Many commentators believe Paul contracted malaria on his first missionary journey during the trip up from the coast of Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey) and could travel no farther than Antioch in Pisidia, thus bringing him into contact with the Galatian people, allowing him to preach to them the gospel message of grace.

Hearing the word of God wrought saving faith in the hearts of the Galatian people which enabled them to exercise that faith by believing and thus were they brought into the kingdom.

Long ago John Gill – commenting on this phrase "known by God" – said "the meaning is, that they were loved by him with an everlasting love, which had been manifested in their conversion, in the drawing of them to himself, and to his Son; that he approved of them, delighted in them, had an exact knowledge, and took special care of them..."

Paul continued on...

Verse 9b – 10

"Even knowing all of this, still you desire to return to the bondage of slavery to paganism and the worship of false gods? For yielding to this doctrine that requires one to become a Jew before they can become a Christian is equivalent to a return to paganism.

We need to understand here that Paul is not saying that the Law is unrighteous, but that the days and moons and feasts of the Law were images and shadows which were fulfilled in the person of Christ.

The Law is the shadow; Christ is the Substance.

For a Jew to continue to seek righteousness and justification in the elements of the Law would be equivalent to the Galatian convert reverting to the worship of pagan gods.

It would be the same as the child who reached the age of majority refusing to accept the wealth that was his and returning to the slavery of the pedagogue.

Lehman Strauss: "...of the various forms of slavery, none is so subtle and so strong as religious slavery."

That is the condition of all men who have not experienced the redemption of Christ or who have lost touch with the truth of their own salvation. They are lost in a world of darkness believing that they are living in the light.

One day Jesus was speaking to some Jews who had come to believe in Him and said (John 8.32), "You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

Other Jews standing by heard what Jesus said and asked in...

John 8:33 "We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, 'You will become free'?"

Apparently, they were not listening in history class or they simply forgot about 400 years in Egypt, the destruction of the northern ten tribes of Israel by the Assyrians, and the 70 years of captivity in Babylon.

Many who have made professions of faith in Christ have fallen into the snare of unscriptural doctrine simply because they have never grown in the word.

"I guess I fell asleep..."

Paul is astounded that these Galatians would prefer to offer the burnt offerings to the Lord on Sabbath days, and to observe the new moon feasts and the feast days according to the requirement of the Law...

...rather than to enjoy the freedom that comes with being a true son of God.

Verse 11

"If these stories I have heard of you are true, then I fear for your souls. I shudder to think that all of my efforts among you went for nothing – that I labored in vain."

I believe Paul is saying to the Galatians in this verse – as well as to the Jewish teachers who taught this false doctrine – that anyone who thought this way could not truly be saved.

To profess to know Christ as Lord and to profess to have experienced the miraculous grace of God and the gift of the Holy Spirit and then to want to set those things aside for the bondage of the Law or to return to the worship of false gods are contradictory concepts.

To claim to know Christ and to have been delivered from the bondage of sin and then to willfully return to that life of sin and disobedience is evidence that all that person got was religion, not salvation.

The word used for "turn again" is formed from the same Greek word from which we get the word conversion.

Paul is saying that to desire to go back to where you were before you were converted is to experience a reverse conversion – a reversion to the bondage of the Law or the bondage of paganism.

From John MacArthur...

In his commentary *The Message of Galatians*, John Stott mentions the wonderful account of John Newton, author of the beloved hymn “Amazing Grace.”

Newton was an only child and lost his mother when he was seven.

At the age of eleven he went to sea as a sailor and became involved in the inhuman African slave trade. Soon hardened by his evil surroundings, he outdid his companions in immorality, vulgarity, and blasphemy.

But when he was twenty-three his ship was caught in a severe storm, and when he began to fear for his life he cried out to God for mercy and was marvelously saved.

Not wanting ever to forget the depths of sin from which he had been rescued by God’s grace, Newton later inscribed the words of Deuteronomy 15:15 above his mantel: “And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt, and the Lord thy God redeemed thee.”

Let us never forget that we, too, were bondsmen in the control of Satan until God saved us by grace through the faith of Jesus Christ that comes by hearing the word of God.